

U.S. SENATOR JACK REED



IRAQ TRIP REPORT



By SENATOR JACK REED

JULY 7-8, 2006

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I. INTRODUCTION

On July 7th and 8th, I conducted my eighth visit to Iraq along with U.S. Senator Joseph Biden.

Our visit took us to Basra where we met with the commander of British forces, MG John Cooper. We stayed overnight in Baghdad where we met with senior American military commanders and our diplomatic staff. We concluded our visit with a stop in Fallujah to visit with United States Marine Corps forces.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The situation in Iraq remains critical and the outcome remains uncertain. There has been progress on the political front with the installation of a permanent and popularly elected government. The cabinet has been completed with the naming of a Minister of Defense and a Minister of the Interior. There has been progress in the training and deployment of the Iraqi army.

This progress has bought additional time. However, our efforts on the civilian aspects of the counter-insurgency remain inadequate. The capacity of ministries to function is still primitive. As such, the delivery of essential services to the Iraqi people is severely constrained.

In the face of political challenges among and between sectarian groups, continued high unemployment and economic malaise, inadequate public services and the combination of insurgent, sectarian and criminal violence, the noted progress is not irreversible nor a guarantee of ultimate stability.

The United States still lacks a coherent and effective strategy. The Administration's sloganeering is wearing thin. "Stay the course" is difficult when a critical component, robust attention to the non-military demands of Iraq, is lacking, and the presence of American forces is both difficult to sustain at present levels and invites growing concern within the United States and within Iraq.

It is important to note that both American military leaders and the Iraqi Prime Minister thought it prudent to begin a phased redeployment of American forces this year. Such redeployment will signal to the Iraqis that the fight is ultimately theirs and that they have indeed made progress with the formation of their Army. Moreover, it will begin to relieve the stress on our forces that continue to do a magnificent job, but are seeing the accumulated cost of more than four years of intense operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At this juncture, the critical question is: what outcome will be acceptable in Iraq?

Reality has disabused all but the most ideologically obsessed that our presence in Iraq will be non-contentious and that Iraq will be transformed spontaneously into an oasis of democracy and market economics which will, in turn, transform the region.

A range of outcomes potentially exists in Iraq from a further downward spiral of violence and instability to a renewed authoritarianism dressed up initially in the trappings of democracy to a gradually emerging society respecting and expanding the rule of law and market activities.

The most decisive factor that the United States has in influencing a favorable outcome is our attention to the non-military needs of Iraq from its economic development to its political maturation as a pluralistic government. And, it is this effort that has been most lacking and is most likely to be given short shrift as budget pressures and other looming crisis constrain our efforts in Iraq.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Iraqi Security Forces *Army*

The Iraqi army continues to grow in number and improve in their fighting capability. However, two significant issues are delaying readiness and must be addressed:

- **The equipping of the Iraqi army must be accelerated.** Presently the Iraqi army does not have equipment equal to the American soldiers. This affects capability and morale. This equipping should not only include equipment transfers by the United States but also foreign military sales agreement.
- **Logistics for the Iraqi Security Forces must be established and maintained.** Virtually every U.S. military commander we met with stated that they can teach the Iraqis to fight, but the army will be useless if they are not supported. The Iraqi army cannot rely on receiving paychecks, food, even gas for trucks. Logistical failures are due to lack of ministerial capacity and commitment by the Iraqi government. The United States should focus on this problem and provide additional military and civilian personnel to assist in the establishment of logistics for the ISF.

Police

- **Increase emphasis on the vetting and training of police.** The growth and development of the police is lagging far behind the ISF. There are also significant problems with loyalty, leadership, and willingness and ability to act as a police force, as opposed to an army.

The problems in the police force contribute to the lack of security in the streets but also inhibit the ability to quell the insurgency. For example, the Marines in Fallujah noted that the insurgents are most comparable to the Mafia. Hijacking, smuggling, black market activities, stealing fuel, fraud and extortion are the stock and trade of the insurgents.

However, the U.S. military is not deployed to Iraq to enforce laws against criminality so that they are not engaged in interfering with the numerous criminal activities, which support the insurgency.

The Iraqi government is charged with suppressing these activities. However, lack of competent police and that fact the insurgents' activities fund Iraqi politicians means the criminal activity goes unchecked. There must be increased focus on the development of the police. Civilian police training experts, from the United States and international community, should be brought to Iraq for such an effort.

Other armed groups

There are three distinctive armed groups which are contributing to the violence and instability in Iraq and must be addressed:

- **Militias must be disbanded and integrated into the ISF.** Sectarian militias continue to pose the gravest security threat in Iraq. The largest militia is the Jaish Al Mahdi (JAM) or the Mahdi Army, under the control of Muqtada al-Sadr.

There is general agreement that the best way to diffuse the militias is to integrate them into ISF.

A plan should be implemented to take in a manageable number of individuals and junior officers from the militias, both Sunni and Shia. (LTG Dempsey estimated that approximately 25,000 could be absorbed into the MOD and 15,000 into the MOI.) The individuals must come in alone, be willing to renounce violence and sincerely pledge their loyalty to the legitimate government of Iraq, and agree to serve in any part of Iraq to avoid sectarian concentration and to avoid simply changing uniforms without changing loyalties because of proximity to fellow former or active militiamen.

Finally, appropriate standards for literacy as well as prior conduct must be maintained

- **The Facilities Protection Services must be reformed.** One of the most highly infiltrated organizations throughout Iraq is the Facilities Protection Service (FPS). Iraq has 31 ministries and 27 have their own FPS. It is estimated that 150,000 individuals are members of the FPS. Each ministry has their own standards and uses the FPS for their own purposes. They have a reputation for gross misconduct which adds to fear and instability in the country.

Legislation must be passed to limit the authority of these units. Pay and administration should be centralized rather than left to the individual ministries. Members of these forces must be “re-vetted” to root out criminals and sectarian partisans.

Finally, these forces must be outfitted with different uniforms to distinguish them from the police and clearly identify them.

- **Personal security detachments must be reformed.** Personal security detachments of prominent government officials and political leaders are a third type of paramilitary force which acts with autonomy. There are approximately 8,700 of these individuals operating in Iraq without counting foreign contractors who perform security functions. The Ministry of Defense pays their salaries but has no control over them.

Generally, these individuals are related to the individual that they are protecting. Leaders in Iraq are unwilling to entrust their security to anyone other than a family member or a fellow tribesman. These security forces must also be reformed and organized along professional lines, but this is admittedly a difficult task to achieve in the near future.

Economic reconstruction

While this Administration has been focused exclusively on our military forces in Iraq, the reconstruction of the Iraqi infrastructure and economy has been virtually ignored. Iraqi Reconstruction funds have been depleted with only a fraction of needed projects completed.

The United States’ ability to aid in ministerial capacity building is hobbled by the lack of U.S. civilian experts in Iraq. In fact, because of the shortage of appropriate civilian advisors, LTG Chiarelli is providing military personnel on a case-by-case basis to help mentor civilian ministries.

The lack of emphasis on reconstruction is having a dire effect on progress in Iraq. Tired of three years without adequate security or services, Iraqi professionals are leaving the country. Those that remain do not trust or feel invested in the new government.

Frustration with services and lack of employment opportunities means angry young men join militias instead. LTG Chiarelli stated that unless we devote renewed attention and additional resources to the economic reconstruction of Iraq and the development of governmental capacity, the emergence of a capable Iraqi security force will not be decisive.

Several steps can be taken immediately to address this situation:

- **Secure fulfillment of international pledges to provide economic support to Iraq.** Given growing budget concerns in the United States, this country can not meet all of Iraq's needs alone.
- **Work with Iraqis to create a master list of necessary reconstruction projects with estimated funding and timelines.** Make funding for such projects a priority in the President's budget. Assign specific projects to the military, Army Corps of Engineers, USAID, and private contractors to ensure completion. Provide competent oversight.
- **Because service in Iraq is presently voluntary for members of U.S. civilian agencies, it is necessary to provide increased incentives and funding for large numbers from the Departments of State, Agriculture, Justice and Commerce to serve in Iraq.** These experts could be used to expand ministry capacity and staff Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) which are building governmental capacity outside of Baghdad.
- **Urge Iraqis to change laws and provide incentives to stimulate international investment.**
- **Establish targeted efforts to increase employment in order to provide young men an alternative to joining the militias.** Consider tailoring reconstruction projects to be labor intensive rather than efficient in order to provide jobs.
- **Assist in privatization of industries, particularly the oil industry to provide employment and ensure that profits are reaching the Iraqi people.**

III. DISCUSSIONS

BASRA

MG John Cooper, Commanding General, Multi-National Division (SouthEast)

Our first meeting in Iraq was with MG John Cooper of the British Army, the commander of coalition forces in the South of Iraq. He is responsible for four provinces, the most prominent of which is Basra. The region is heavily Shia and is a major area of oil production with the city of Basra being the major terminal in the South for the export of petroleum products.

MG Cooper indicated that the fundamental conflict in his area of operations is the jostling for power among competing Shia factions. The limited number of Sunnis has inhibited the reach of jihadists and former Baathists who have formed the front ranks of the insurgency in other parts of Iraq.

MG Cooper feels that his critical challenge is to secure and sustain the consent of the region for the political and economic changes that are underway in Iraq. He feels that

there is at present significant support for these efforts, but this support is a declining resource without tangible signs of progress. In his assessment, coalition forces have approximately two more years before their presence will become disabling rather than enabling. "Iraqis recognize what we bring but are not a particularly tolerant people."

MG Cooper's assessment is that the Iraqi government contains talented individuals, but there is no effective civil service. He suggests that such an effective bureaucracy may emerge at the end of Prime Minister Maliki's four-year term. In the meantime, he sees the Coalition's role as building this capacity. In this regard, he has limited resources.

The critical demands of the Iraqis in the region are for reliable electricity, adequate water and sewage services, and employment. The issue of employment is critical not only as an economic factor but as a way of potentially removing a generation of angry and frustrated young men from the ranks of sectarian militias. The British are about to begin a \$12 million infrastructure project that will employ approximately 800 Iraqis for six months. (The project could be done with heavy equipment and only 50 workers, but that would undermine the essential purpose to provide employment.) This project is admirable but insufficient given the thousands of unemployed.

The region has great economic potential because of its oil wealth. However, this potential will not be realized without significant foreign investment. Such investment is inhibited by significant security concerns as well as antiquated laws that impede international investment.

The greatest source of instability in the South is the existence of sectarian militias with ties to the provincial government and to the police. These militias have grown over the last several years. The largest militia is the Jaish Al Mahdi ("JAM") or the Mahdi Army, which is the fiefdom of Muqtada al-Sadr. Sadr directly challenged the Coalition in the first days after the fall of Saddam. After being suppressed but avoiding accountability, Sadr has reverted to a political role. Nevertheless, he remains a menacing force.

One of the most highly infiltrated organizations throughout Iraq is the Facilities Protection Service (FPS). MG Cooper was the first of many officials to describe the FPS as a major problem. Iraq has 31 ministries and 27 have their own FPS. It is estimated that 150,000 individuals are members of the FPS. Each ministry has their own standards and uses the FPS for their own purposes.

A crescendo of sectarian murders, many attributed to police and other security forces, led Prime Minister Maliki to recently declare a State of Emergency in Basra and to confront the Governor of the province and the local police. But, more fundamental steps must be taken with respect to the militias and to the infiltration of local governments and police forces.

MG Cooper confirmed that the Governor and his clique are abusing power and either tolerate or encourage gross corruption and sectarian excesses. The British were disengaged from the provincial government for nine months because the Governor

refused to cooperate. Because of the pressure from Baghdad and fear for his political future, the Governor has reengaged with the British. In addition, PM Maliki has appointed a Committee to address the issues in Basra, particularly sectarian violence.

The current plan of the Coalition is to begin to turn operational control of the provinces over to the Iraqis. The first province, Muthana, with a population of approximately 850,000, was transferred on July 13th. British forces redeployed, leaving Iraqi police forces in charge with periodic patrols by British forces through the province. If there is a crisis, then the plan is to dispatch additional police from Baghdad. If these forces are insufficient, then Iraqi army forces will be dispatched with the last option being the reinsertion of Coalition forces. In the September/October time frame, Dhi Qar province is scheduled for transfer followed by Maysan province. Basra province will be the last province transferred to local control.

MG Cooper shared his overall concept for the immediate future. The first stage is the reformation of the police. British soldiers and civilian police advisors are now in the Iraqi police stations on a regular basis. MG Cooper believes that it will take a minimum of six to nine months to make real progress. In conjunction with the police, the intelligence services must also be reformed. The second stage is to place Iraqi forces in the lead, and finally to have the Iraqi forces take full control and responsibility.

MG Cooper estimates that the situation in his area of operations can be stabilized by the end of 2006. Iraqi civilian authority will continue to mature, but it will be three to four years before it will be self-reliant.

MG Cooper also commented on Iranian influence. He is not aware of a “monolithic” policy of Iran saying “go do things in Iraq.” But, he pointed out that Iranian intelligence is a fairly constant presence. He has not seen an increased flow of weapons from Iran in the last six months, but he has seen an increased flow of “improvised explosive device” (IED) technology and “man portable air defense systems” (MANPADS). MG Cooper asserted that British intelligence would know if there was a concerted effort by Iran in Southern Iraq, and they have not seen it. He suggested that many Iraqi Shia appreciate the Iranians, but they still maintain a national identity as Iraqis.

In his final comments, MG Cooper stressed that we all must manage expectations. “What is produced in Iraq is going to be workable but not pretty.” He also pointed out that it is difficult to predict with any certainty beyond six months.

BAGHDAD

LTG Peter Chiarelli, Commanding General, Multi-National Corps-Iraq

LTG Chiarelli made the point with great precision and great emphasis that reconstruction efforts are lagging along with efforts to create an effective governmental sector. Failure in these areas will jeopardize recent successes in the development of Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi political process.

For example, he pointed to the fact that the United States supported the construction of a large water treatment plant in Sadr City, but to date, a complementary water distribution system is lacking. Without such a system, says LTG Chiarelli, the water treatment plant represents the largest “water fountain” in the world. While he was a Divisional Commander, he was able to hook-up approximately 200,000 homes, but that was only a fraction of the necessary connections. Completion of the task was left to the Iraqi government and the task is still undone. He now has \$21 million to try to finish the job.

LTG Chiarelli further pointed out the need for the Iraqi government to create a legal environment that is conducive to the economic development of the country.

There is a continuing and significant challenge to begin the task of privatizing the economy. In the oil sector, immediate privatization of the two large state-owned oil companies would likely be disruptive, but there are scores of smaller companies that could be privatized. A conscious part of such a strategy should be the expansion of job opportunities. Rampant unemployment among Iraqi youth is fueling the frustration and anger that feeds the militias and the insurgency.

The lack of adequate resources for reconstruction, backed by incompetent Iraqi administrators, could decisively undermine all our efforts in Iraq. According to LTG Chiarelli, “turning off reconstruction funding is like turning off ammunition.”

The inadequacy of Iraqi ministries directly affects the ability of the security forces to function. Critical ministries in addition to the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior are essential. As an example, LTG Chiarelli cited that the security forces will have organic fuel trucks to supply their needs, but the allocation of fuel is a function of the Ministry of Oil and, in the past, there has been no certainty that the Ministry would give priority to security needs.

Because of the shortage of appropriate civilian advisors, LTG Chiarelli is providing military personnel on a case-by-case basis to help mentor civilian ministries.

While these reconstruction needs and capacities go without adequate attention, the insurgency replicates itself by replacing its losses and adapting to our changing tactics. The continuing violence saps the strength and determination of the Iraqi people and results in the not surprising departure of many skilled Iraqi professionals.

LTG Chiarelli reiterated that unless we devote renewed attention and additional resources to the economic reconstruction of Iraq and the development of governmental capacity, the emergence of a capable Iraqi security force will not be decisive.

As a final note, LTG Chiarelli cited the potentially destabilizing influence of Iran. He specifically cited the introduction of “Explosively formed projectile” (EFP) technology from Iran that has made IEDs much more lethal. In addition, the Iranians are pouring money into social programs in Iraq that could later translate into enhanced influence.

He also noted the growing presence of militias with special attention to the Mahdi Army, which has roughly doubled in the last several years. Once again, he thought that an aggressive program of employment could act as a damper on such growth by offering young Iraqis an alternative to participation in the militias.

Country Team Briefing

We had the opportunity to have a working supper with members of the Country Team led by Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) David Satterfield. The Ambassador was in Washington, D.C. during our visit.

DCM Satterfield indicated that the approach to building capacity in Iraq was based on small teams of American advisors assisting the Iraqis rather than a larger presence that would more significantly affect governmental functions. He suggested that this policy was the result of a conscious decision in the United States government reflecting an appreciation that it would be difficult to find sufficient Americans for a larger effort, that the Iraqis would resent such a larger effort, and that the security costs for a large contingent of non-Iraqis would be prohibitive. In place of an aggressive presence of American civilian advisors, the Administration has developed an aggressive agenda for the Iraqis to meet. He indicated that they have developed an item-by-item agenda of actions that the Iraqi ministries should meet.

I respectfully disagreed.

The civilian effort in Iraq has been hobbled from the beginning by an inability to harness sufficient numbers of Americans with appropriate expertise. This is a function of the bureaucratic culture of American civilian agencies, and the failure of the Administration to change that culture with appropriate incentives.

The most obvious aspect is the fact that duty in Iraq is still voluntary and that the incentive structure of most agencies gives no special credit to the importance and danger of serving in Iraq. Rather than reflecting the outcome of a serious debate about the proper approach to Iraq, the current emphasis on a limited number of American advisors with a “robust” agenda is an attempt to rationalize a continuing failure to match our military effort with a complementary civilian effort.

I pointed out the continuing inability to field Provincial Reconstruction Teams (“PRTs”) throughout Iraq. This is despite the fact that the State Department proclaimed with great fanfare last November that soon there would be sixteen PRTs throughout Iraq.

Satterfield responded that there are now five teams. He attributed the shortfall to the failure of allies to live up to their commitments to field teams. He suggested additional teams would be forthcoming.

LTG Martin Dempsey, Commanding General, Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq

We had the opportunity to meet with LTG Martin Dempsey who is leading the efforts to train Iraqi security forces.

LTG Dempsey pointed to several serious issues including the presence of numerous armed groups ranging from militias to FPS to personal security details for Iraqi political figures. The proliferation of armed groups is a serious challenge to stability and represents a challenge to consolidating Iraqi security forces under the formal control of the government of Iraq.

In response to a question about the sectarian make-up of Iraqi security forces, LTG Dempsey indicated that it is difficult to determine the make-up of the enlisted forces since such information is voluntary on enlistment forms. With respect to non-commissioned and commissioned positions, such information is required and leadership positions are approximately divided with 60% Shia, 25% Sunni and 15% Kurd.

The Iraqi Army has ten divisions. LTG Dempsey explained that the even-numbered divisions originated as localized national guard units and have a more pronounced sectarian basis than the odd-numbered divisions that were organized on a national basis. The Second and Fourth Divisions are predominately Kurdish. The Sixth Division in Baghdad is predominately Shia. The Eighth and Tenth Divisions are predominately Shia.

The odd-numbered divisions reflect the overall composition of the country with approximately 65% of the troops being Shia, 20-25% being Sunni and approximately 15% being Kurdish.

LTG Dempsey indicated that the fabric of the Iraqi army was solid. Army MG Lloyd Austin III, Chief of Staff, U.S. Central Command, just completed an assessment of the cohesion and capability of the army and was favorably impressed. LTG Dempsey indicated that the army has a credible fighting spirit and mutual loyalty that is demonstrated by their unwillingness to abandon wounded comrades on the battlefield. However, he indicated that there is a real danger that the Iraqi army can be overstretched and exhausted.

LTG Dempsey was highly critical of the FPS. They have a reputation for gross misconduct. Under the last government, the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Health were particularly notorious. However, it appears that the government of Prime Minister Maliki is willing to take on the issue of the FPS.

In this regard, several steps must be initiated. Legislation must be passed to limit the authority of these units. Pay and administration should be centralized rather than left to the individual ministries. Members of these forces must be “re-vetted” to root out criminals and sectarian partisans.

Finally, these forces must be outfitted with different uniforms to distinguish them from the police and clearly identify them.

There are additional paramilitary forces that operate with autonomy. These are the personal security detachments of prominent government officials and political leaders. There are approximately 8,700 of these individuals operating in Iraq without counting foreign contractors who perform security functions. The Ministry of Defense pays their salaries but has no control over them. Generally, these individuals are related to the individual that they are protecting. Leaders in Iraq are unwilling to entrust their security to anyone other than a family member or a fellow tribesman. These security forces must also be reformed and organized along professional lines. This is not likely to happen in the immediate future.

LTG Dempsey has the major responsibility to enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the Ministry of the Interior (MOI). He described his efforts in this regard. He has approximately 100 advisors (transition team members) in the MOD and an equal number in the MOI. These transition teams were started in January of 2006.

An assessment of the capabilities of each ministry is made each month. In the first few months of assistance, there was relatively rapid progress since even rudimentary procedures represented an improvement over what were entirely dysfunctional arrangements. Progress is not as rapid as more complex issues are addressed, but it remains constant. The key areas of attention are: budgets, contracting, communications, logistics, plans and policy development, intelligence and personnel management.

LTG Dempsey indicated that the Minister of Defense has the potential to be an effective leader. He is broadly respected as a professional military officer. He is both intelligent and diligent. The Minister of Interior is more difficult to evaluate at the moment. He was a last minute choice for the position. He has changed political parties several times so that he has no base in any political party. He is bright with a subdued demeanor. There is concern that he will be buffeted by the political forces in the MOI without any personal or political allies to support him.

LTG Dempsey stated that significant resources will be required to sustain the Iraqi army. In addition, approximately \$1.5 billion over the next five years is necessary to modernize the army and transform it from a counterinsurgency force to a national defense force. This transformation will have a positive effect on the perception of the Army by its soldiers.

This transformation will also require a foreign military sales agreement. Among the key items of equipment that the army needs are aviation and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets.

In response to a question about the feasibility and desirability of beginning the withdrawal of American forces, LTG Dempsey replied that there were many reasons to

draw down. “We have to take our hand off the bike seat even if it is going to wobble a bit.”

He stated that MG Austin suggested that transition teams rather than combat units should be the main effort. In this regard, the “Military Transition Teams” (MITTs) may have to grow a bit as well as include more logistical advisors. MITTs are teams made up of 10 to 15 American military personnel who are hand-selected and reside with the Iraqi unit. These teams have organic interpreters to facilitate their activities.

LTG Dempsey indicated that the weakest link in the Iraqi army was leadership.

Beginning on September 1st, the emerging capabilities of the Iraqi army will be put to the test as their joint headquarters is scheduled to begin initial operations. Many within the leadership of the Iraqi army are fearful that they are not ready. However, LTG Dempsey indicated that this was a necessary step to compel the Iraqis to step up to their responsibilities, and he is confident that they can succeed although it will not be without initial difficulties.

The question was raised about increasing the size of the Iraqi army. The current deployment of approximately 70,000 Iraqi troops in Baghdad to suppress the epidemic of violence has suggested to some that a much larger force is needed to replicate this approach nationwide.

LTG Dempsey stated that Iraqi officials are pushing for an enlargement of the force. They feel that it may make the army more effective and the fact that such an enlargement will create more jobs is not lost upon them.

LTG Dempsey feels that such an enlargement may make some sense in the future, but not at the moment. It would add to the already significant logistical support problem. Moreover, it would further complicate the need to integrate the militias into the Iraqi army and make them accountable to national leaders. In a sense, an immediate increase in the size of the Iraqi army may effectively absorb the capacity to integrate the militias.

With regard to the critical mission of integrating the militias into the formal structure of the Iraqi security forces, LTG Dempsey offered some basic parameters.

First, limits must be set on the number of individuals that will be taken and their status within the army upon integration. Some of the militias are offering inflated numbers of their membership as well as inflated ranks of their membership. The current presumption is to take a manageable number of individuals from the militias representing less than their avowed membership as well as taking junior leaders rather than senior commanders.

Second, individuals rather than units will be accepted.

Third, integration must embrace the Sunni community as well as the Shia community so integration cannot be offered only to members of the Shia militias. It must also include

Sunnis who are willing to renounce violence and sincerely pledge their loyalty to the legitimate government of Iraq.

Fourth, individual applicants must agree to serve in any part of Iraq to avoid sectarian concentration and to avoid simply changing uniforms without changing loyalties because of proximity to fellow former or active militiamen.

Fifth, appropriate standards for literacy as well as prior conduct must be maintained. LTG Dempsey estimated that approximately 25,000 could be absorbed into the MOD and 15,000 into the MOI.

Political Military Section (Pol-Mil)

We had the opportunity to have a working lunch with representatives from the Pol-Mil section of the Embassy. They made the point that the two most critical issues were the lack of security and need for competent leadership and capable personnel in the Iraqi ministries.

They pointed out various examples with respect to the ministries. On an encouraging note, they suggested that the Oil Ministry, long noted for widespread corruption, is changing for the better. Exports from the northern fields to Turkey have increased. With regard to the MOD and the MOI, they indicated that there continues to be significant friction between the two ministries. Pol-Mil spends a great deal of time trying to get these ministries to communicate with each other and to cooperate. They are hopeful that this relationship will work out in the long run.

One of the active missions of the Pol-Mil section is to try to identify the emerging leaders of Iraq who are now in their early thirties to forties. They hope to develop these individuals including exposing them to training programs in the United States.

The representatives pointed out that there was a need to spend additional resources to develop the justice system and overall attention to the rule of law. They further noted that there was a proliferation of intelligence services within Iraq and they were hampered by an inability to coordinate and provide effective operational support.

Finally, they noted the growing criminality within the country and the need to deal with the militias.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Maliki. He has been thrust into an extraordinarily difficult situation.

His initial comments stressed that the Iraqi people were in a battle to defeat the challenge of terrorism. He stressed that without security there could be no economic progress or political stability. He traced all of the difficulties in Iraq to the lack of security. He

indicated that the Saddamists and Baathists want a system to serve their interests, but his government is determined to rid Iraq of those interests.

He pointed out that Iraq is rich with oil and gas but the country still suffers from corruption and the residual effects of sanctions.

His three priorities are security, public services and national reconciliation.

He pointed out that he just completed a formal visit to the Gulf region to mobilize support for his government.

PM Maliki shared with us his views on the problem of militias in Iraq. He indicated that there are many kinds of militias in Iraq. He noted that the FPS and certain police units were “bad elements.” Because of the FPS, “some governmental ministries are more dangerous than the militias.” He suggested that many FPS units are carrying out murders and kidnappings. In addition, they are attacking the infrastructure that they are supposedly protecting.

He attributed the problems of the FPS and the police to the policies of the Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority Paul Bremer who formed these units without proper screening.

PM Maliki suggested that the appropriate counter to the FPS and the police was a more capable Iraqi army. And, these capabilities must be achieved quickly.

The Prime Minister offered his views with regard to national reconciliation. He stated that anyone who accepts reconciliation would be welcomed. And, in turn, anyone who opposes it would be “dealt with.” He used this argument to reiterate his call for a more capable Iraqi army with enhanced equipment and increased numbers. He emphasized the need to choose the “right people” for the Iraqi army while drawing down the FPS and the militias.

He also pointed out that small groups are no longer conducting terrorism. In his view, entire areas and populations are convulsed by terrorism. He again used this as a justification for additional Iraqi military forces.

In response to a question, the Prime Minister offered his views on the withdrawal of American forces. He stated that it would be feasible and possible to begin a withdrawal soon. He indicated that Iraqi security forces are capable. He suggested that the withdrawal of American forces could begin in stages as the Iraqi forces grew in capability.

He conceded that the Iraqi security forces must pick up the pace of their development to accelerate a withdrawal. In his view, the formation of the army is “slow” and the “arming is weak.” He also stated “people at high levels have no loyalty.” All of this is the rationale for his efforts to accelerate the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces.

He concluded with respect to the redeployment of American forces that he was of the mind that “we will be able to do something this year, but not in large numbers.”

In response to another question, he discussed his views regarding getting “Sunni buy-in.” The Prime Minister stated the Sunnis are now part of the political process and have high positions in the government. Those who “carry the flag of terrorism” were not part before and are not part now. He stressed that reconciliation is an option for both Sunnis and Shia. All who have not committed murder are welcome. “The door is open.”

He cautioned that bringing militias into the Iraqi army would be a mistake. The army, in his view, cannot abide the presence of militia members. He stated the cabinet made the decision in the preceding few days that no militia members will be admitted. He stated the decision of the cabinet forbade any partisanship in the army because it will cause infighting and murder. “The containment of the militia has to be far away from the Army and politics.”

In further discussion, we asked whether a member of the Badr Brigade would be allowed in the new Iraqi security forces. The Prime Minister responded that such a member could enter if he “really gives up” his membership in the Badr Brigade, but it would be really dangerous to bring in whole units of the militia into the Iraqi security services.

We then asked if he anticipated that the Iraqi parliament would make additional changes to the Constitution to help attract more Sunni support for the government. The Prime Minister indicated that this was a legislative issue and he was part of the executive branch. However, he anticipated that there would be changes. But, he did not see this as an immediate issue.

With regard to the specific issue of the division of oil resources, the Prime Minister stated that the Constitution has already guaranteed the distribution of oil resources. He said that regional and national concerns would be negotiated with each sector having a check on the other. This interpretation of the Constitution was disputed by Senator Biden. The Prime Minister responded that there would be a “fair distribution.” “We know that the oil is in the Shia areas, but that does not exclude other areas from having a role.” He stated that “everyone who has oil will bring it in and the government will distribute it equally.”

Senator Biden pressed him on the point that, without political reconciliation among the Iraqis, American sacrifices will be difficult to justify. The Prime Minister responded that he had great appreciation for the actions of the Americans to free Iraq of “an evil dictator.”

“We are greatly saddened for the lives of Americans and Coalition members who fell on Iraqi soil.” The Prime Minister stressed that Iraq was still fighting terrorism and still needed U.S. help. He pledged to spare no efforts to make his government work for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

Iraqi Defense Minister Abdel Kader Jassem al-Obeidi

We had the opportunity to meet with the recently appointed Minister of Defense, Abdel Kader Jassem al-Obeidi.

We asked how he would describe the challenges that he faced. The Minister responded that no one can build an army quickly. People and equipment take time. The problem facing the Iraqi army is that the infrastructure was destroyed and rebuilding it will not be an easy matter.

He indicated that, in the opinion of American generals, the logistical capabilities of the Iraqi army are weak. He suggested that the most significant deficiencies in the army lie in command and control, mobility, training and logistics. They are working on these tasks, but they have a long way to go.

We asked the Minister whether there are elements within the army that are not fully committed to the government of Iraq. He responded that in the beginning there was the need to form any semblance of an army. As such, there was no attention to quality. Now, they do have some capability.

Divisions 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 have been well chosen. They can be sent anywhere without problem. They are completely loyal with competent leadership. In the rest of the divisions, there is a "ratio of distrust" of about 10% to 15%. They are working on this problem. He added that the Ministry of Defense does not face the scale of problems in this regard that is faced by the Ministry of Interior. The MOD has programs to ensure that every soldier is loyal to Iraq. He assured us that whoever falls behind will be discharged.

The Minister described the terrorist threat in Iraq. The most important threat, in his view, is from the jihadists that work under the umbrella of Al Qaeda. The other kinds are old regime groups. The latter are weak but support other terrorists financially. The militias are more of a challenge than the old regime groups. He indicated that the old regime elements and the militias can be dealt with politically, but Al Qaeda only understands force.

The Minister also indicated that Iraqi forces still need the support of the multinational forces.

In response to another question, the Minister described his understanding of the strategy of the opponents of the Iraqi government. Until the end of 2004, the strategy was to focus on engaging coalition and Iraqi forces. But after the operations in Fallujah in 2004, the focus has been on IEDs. The targets are mostly civilians to create panic and fear. The center of these attacks is in Baghdad. He added that the pace of attacks on oil and gas infrastructure is also picking up. The overarching strategy is to make Iraqis feel that their government is failing. After Samarra in February, they are trying to incite sectarian violence. The MOD stated that the government is trying to control all three. They are trying to respond quickly to protect citizens and infrastructure.

We asked the Minister specifically his views on the redeployment of American forces.

The Minister was reluctant to answer, describing this as a “technical question.” He then responded that there always has been a plan involving training teams (MITT teams). These teams are doing an excellent job. He cited the improving readiness conditions of Iraqi divisions as evidence of progress. He suggested that as Iraqi divisions continue to improve then American forces could begin to deploy.

He added that they are working on specific deadlines and schedules. These timetables are frequently reevaluated. He concluded by stating that “the more our capacity is built up, the less Multinational Force-Iraq will be needed. But the answer is a technical one, not a political one.”

We also asked about the comments that the Ministry of Interior was not reliable. The Minister replied that the strength of the Iraqi army is that it has gained the trust of the Iraqi people. Religion does not matter because the “army was built the right way for all of Iraq.” In his opinion, exactly the opposite is true for the Ministry of Interior. The MOI tried to build an army, but they should not be an army. “First, they should be traffic police.”

FALLUJAH

First Marine Expeditionary Force (1MEF)

Senator Biden and I had the privilege of visiting with the First Marine Expeditionary Force (1MEF) in Fallujah.

1MEF makes up the bulk of the Multinational Division West under LTG Chiarelli, the Multinational Force Commander. There are 29,723 soldiers and Marines in this Division. The Marines are the largest component with 19,464 personnel. Over 53% of these Marines are on their second deployment to Iraq. Indeed, there is a small percentage of Marines that are on their fourth deployment. Since February 28, 2006, they have sustained 95 KIAs.

Complementing these multinational forces are two Iraqi divisions, the 1st and 7th, with an authorized Iraqi force of 18,972. At present, only 13,662 Iraqi soldiers are assigned to these divisions. The gap of 5,310 personnel represents a reduction of the effective power of the combined forces. One of the reasons for the gap is that one of the divisions is recently formed and they are still trying to build up to their authorized strength. But, in addition, there are problems common to both divisions including excessive leave and absences. The Marines commented that they are reliable units but that they need more of them.

The Marine commanders spoke of the casualties that they have sustained. The majority of these casualties were the result of IEDs with the rest the result of small arms fire and

indirect fires. The most effective attacks against American forces are, in order of effectiveness: IEDs, snipers, and indirect fire.

In response to our questions regarding the character of the insurgency in Al Anbar province, the Marines stated the insurgency is dominated by Al Qaeda elements.

Nationalistic insurgents have been marginalized or subsumed by the Al Qaeda oriented elements. The primary tool of the insurgents is murder and intimidation directed against the Iraqi people.

The priority of their targets begins with the police and continues with Iraqi contractors and governmental officials. In the last three months, the Marines noted that fundamentalism has grown in the province, which feeds into some of the more radical insurgents.

The Marines made the point that the insurgents are most comparable to the Mafia. Their political impulses are often subordinated to their criminal instincts. Hijacking, smuggling, black market activities, stealing fuel, fraud, extortion, all of these are the stock and trade of the insurgents. They are not dependent on outside forces since their criminal activities support their insurgent activities and their insurgent activities are a way to protect their criminal livelihoods.

The Marines pointed out that they are not here to enforce laws against criminality so that they are not engaged in interfering with the numerous criminal activities, which support the insurgency. The Iraqi government is charged with suppressing these activities. However, these activities also fund the politics of Iraq and there is a reluctance to suppress the insurgents because they are funding politicians in the province and in Baghdad.

The Marines indicated that border infiltration gets a lot of notoriety but that it is not a serious problem. Foreign fighters are few in number. Unfortunately, they make up for it in their lethality and ruthlessness. Ninety percent of the insurgency is composed of indigenous Iraqis.

The Marines pointed out that one of the problems that they face is the routine release of detainees. Under prevailing law, a detainee must have a trial in 18 months or be released. The Marines believe that this release policy is affecting the credibility of their actions as they try to apprehend insurgents.

The Marines pointed out that attacks against our forces and Iraqi governmental forces are at an all time high. This is a function of the fact that there are more coalition and Iraqi forces in the field so that there are more opportunities to conduct attacks. Moreover, the increased volume of attacks must be balanced by the recognition that these attacks are less effective.

They also pointed out the death of Al Zarqawi has had little or no effect on the insurgency.

The mission of the Multi-National Force-West is to support the development of the Iraqi security forces and transition to a situation where the Iraqi security forces take the lead.

As General Casey, Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq, has indicated, Al Anbar province is a key to the success of our operations in Iraq and at the heart of Al Anbar are the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi. The Marine commanders believe that there will be a continuing need for three multinational brigades in Al Anbar and there are no significant numbers of FPS in the province.

The Ministry of Health maintained a FPS at the hospital in Ramadi, but, when the hospital was retaken as part of the clearing operation on July 5th, local leaders insisted that the FPS be barred from returning because of their corruption and unreliability.

The Iraqi police have not grown in overall numbers. The Marines estimate they need approximately 4,000 police in Ramadi. There are currently approximately 2,000. Iraqi security forces have grown with the army expanding from 2,000 to 13,000. However, the Marines repeated the constant complaint that Iraqi security forces must be adequately supported by their government with logistic and personnel systems.

The Marines described the Governor of the province as a “survivor” who is trying hard to gain support and resources for the provincial government and associated Iraqi security forces. The Marines transport him each week to Baghdad where he can plead his case. As a Sunni confronting a predominately Shia government, he has an uphill struggle.

The Marines spoke about the transition teams that are embedded with the Iraqi forces. Again, these 10 to 15 person teams are hand-selected and reside with the Iraqi unit. These teams have organic interpreters to facilitate their activities. The teams are distributed to the Iraqi military (MITTs), the border security forces (BITTs), national police (NPITTs) and the port of entry police (PITTs).

The training for the MITTs begins with two weeks of basic training followed by a three week advisor course that emphasizes cultural interaction and advice from former advisors. This training is followed by a month of team training at Twenty-Nine Palms involving realistic scenarios. Additional training culminates in a 14 day turnover period with the team that they are replacing. The Marines described the MITTs as the number one combat multiplier at their disposal. They added that the Iraqis are “inspired” by these teams. But, once again, the Marines pointed out that there was inadequate logistical support for Iraqi formations including these MITT teams.

The Marines cited five critical problem areas hampering the effectiveness of Iraqi security forces.

First, pay is unreliable due to the incompetence of the Iraqi government together with the suggestion that Shia officials in Baghdad are not sympathetic to the Sunni forces in Al Anbar and may deliberately drag their feet.

Second, there are insufficient numbers of Iraqi security forces because of difficulties involving both recruiting and retention.

Third, “life support contracts” for Iraqi forces are mismanaged. At the end of June, the Iraqi government became formally responsible to supply food, fuel, power and water throughout the nation. Already, the Marines indicate that this is a huge problem forcing the Marines to backstop the inadequate efforts of the Iraqi government. Most of these shortfalls are caused by corruption abetted by incompetence.

Fourth, there is still a dearth of competent leadership among Iraqi security forces.

Finally, incentives must be developed to recognize the danger and difficult challenges of Al Anbar province in order to attract and retain competent and capable forces.

We asked the Marines about the status of their equipment. They indicated that they were maintaining readiness rates of approximately 96%. However, they noted that they are placing great stress on their equipment. For example, flying hours are running 200% more than normal. This, of course, will dramatically affect the effective lifespan of the equipment.

We also had a chance to speak with the State Department representative with the Marines. He believes that the Marines have accomplished all they can reasonably be expected to accomplish. They are quickly running out of a mission. It is time to see if the Iraqi forces can perform without the Marines. The key parameters are the capability of the Iraqis to support their troops in the field and whether sectarian divisions are so acute that they will prevent the Iraqis from forging even minimal political cohesion.

In his view, the United States is currently in a holding pattern. We are delaying the inevitable day when the Iraqis must step forward and, in the meantime, we are suffering additional casualties.